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TAGS: PREL PBTS CM NI

SUBJECT: MIXED COMMISSION PUNTS BAKASSI TO PRESIDENTS, UNSYG

REF: ABUJA 1657 AND 1648

Classified By: A/DCM Claudia Anyaso for Reasons 1.5 (B & D).

¶11. (C/NF) The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission met October 21-22 in Abuja, and after deliberation on Bakassi "decided to refer the matter to the Heads of State of Cameroon and Nigeria and the Secretary-General of the United Nations." The Mixed Commission had scheduled this session to last only two days, and most of that in plenary sessions hearing reports on the Lake Chad area. UNSRSG Ould-Abdallah told the October 21 opening Plenary, attended by PolCouns, that he had received positions on the maritime boundary issues from the Nigeria and Cameroon delegations, and that he had given each to the other and asked for reactions during the session. Apparently the delegations gave him no responses, nor did they work out any methodology for the maritime boundaries issue during this short session, because Ould-Abdallah ended the session saying he awaits their respective reactions by November 15, 2004.

¶12. (C/NF) Ould-Abdallah told poloff October 22 after the Mixed Commission session that Cameroon's President Biya wished to meet with Nigeria's President Obasanjo and UNSYG Annan in Geneva. No date set. Ould-Abdallah said he would like to see more pressure on both sides for compliance, and that he had asked the Cameroonians to make an effort to tone down their public and private rhetoric in order to make progress on the substantive issues. Ould-Abdallah opined that the Cameroon delegation did not seem to be on the same page as President Biya.

¶13. (C/NF) Ould-Abdallah told PolCouns on October 4, and poloff on October 22 after the Mixed Committee session, that he speculated that the Nigerian military wanted either:

-- a better share for Nigeria of the oil-rich maritime areas past the 15 nautical miles delineated in the ICJ ruling;

OR

-- a long-term lease for an enclave on part of Bakassi.

Ould-Abdallah characterized the latter enclave as a place where Nigerians on Bakassi "could live under Nigerian rule like Americans do in Guantanamo." He did not have proposals from Nigeria for either of the above. Ould-Abdallah added that he thought the Nigerian military might be balking for patriotic reasons instead of for money.

¶14. (C/NF) Comment: Obasanjo has long said the maritime boundaries and Bakassi will be solved by the two presidents (reflets), and Ould-Abdallah now says Biya wants to meet. Whether or not such a meeting is advisable or occurs, there will be little done at the next Mixed Commission session set for December 7-8 or 7-9 if so much of its short time is scheduled for hearing reports on past work in plenary, and so little is devoted to working out the outstanding issues.  
CAMPBELL